Go for it!

A guide to choosing and using assistive devices

Government of Canada
Gouvernement du Canada
Canada

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A guide to choosing and using assistive devices

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The Division wishes to thank all those who contributed time and effort to the completion of this Guide. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official views of Health Canada or Veterans Affairs Canada, who are not responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of the information published in this Guide. The inclusion of any activity or course of action does not imply that Health Canada or Veterans Affairs Canada accept, endorse or consider it as being superior to any other.

© Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada 2002
Cat. H39-631/2002E
ISBN 0-662-32551-6

This publication is available, on demand, in alternative formats.

Cette publication est également disponible en français sous le titre :
Allez-y! Guide sur le choix et l'utilisation des aides fonctionnelles.

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Chapter 1

What are assistive devices?

What are assistive devices?

An assistive device is any product that can be used to make the activities of daily life at work, home, or play easier.

Put simply, assistive devices are any thing or service you use to enhance your independence.

This guide focuses on assistive devices. It covers the many issues seniors, veterans, individuals with a disability and their caregivers need to consider before starting the process of obtaining assistive devices. Having this information empowers you in finding the right solutions.

If you feel you're not able to follow the advice in this guide yourself, then get help from your family, friends, other relatives, or try to contact a person who uses assistive devices. Find the best advisors in the area and encourage them to help with your case. Remember, in the end, this process is about your life, your activities, your home, and your lifestyle!

If every day you're bothered with a difficult or impossible task or activity of daily living, don't believe your troubles can't be solved. They can!

Never just accept things as they are. Almost anything is possible today!

Peter's way

Peter is a 75-year-old veteran who was severely paralyzed in a car accident. A keen volunteer, he wants to continue working with students at his local library. He's received therapy to sit and is now able to use an electric wheelchair. At his request, the library made level the three-step entrance so Peter can enter the building.

Peter can't write with a pen because of his weak hand, but a computer is adapted for his needs.

Peter found it difficult to use the toilet but has been provided with strategies to manage his toileting.

A variety of solutions

Peter's case shows the variety of solutions you can try when "filling the gap" between what you want and where you are.

Therapy/rehabilitation can be provided, so you can increase your physical abilities and tolerance (Peter has been rehabilitated to be able to balance and sit).

Environments can be changed so you can manage with greater ease (the steps of the library's entrance were made level).

Assistive devices can be used to perform, or assist you in performing activities (the computer for volunteer work, the electric wheelchair for mobility).

Personal assistants can be used for activities you can't manage yourself (using the toilet facilities).

You're the expert!

There are as many ways to solve problems as there will be opinions on how you ought to manage your restrictions and live your life. Professional advisors in assistive devices, such as occupational therapists or physiotherapists, will provide solutions to some of your problems. But don't think their opinions count more than yours, or that you must accept a solution if you don't feel it's the right one. You're the only person who knows what's right for you.

The design, look and colour of assistive devices are often the subject of much discussion between

users and advisors. Many users find their assistive devices become part of their identity and personality. Some have difficulty accepting an assistive device which they find plain or unattractive. Then again, certain devices such as orthotics don't offer much flexibility in style and appearance.

Continue persisting until you find solutions that are right for **you**. It's your life, your activities, your home, and your lifestyle. You're the real expert!

Some options

Doing it in the same way

If in social situations it's important for you to cope like a person without a restriction or disability, you're entitled to find the best solution for you.

For example, Marion broke her right hip and after surgery, she no longer walks as well as she used to. But she didn't want to have a wheelchair for outings with her friends; she wanted to walk like other people. So she chose a walking stick with a little rest-seat, where she can pause and rest her legs and back. Marion knows this makes walking slower, but this is what she wanted.

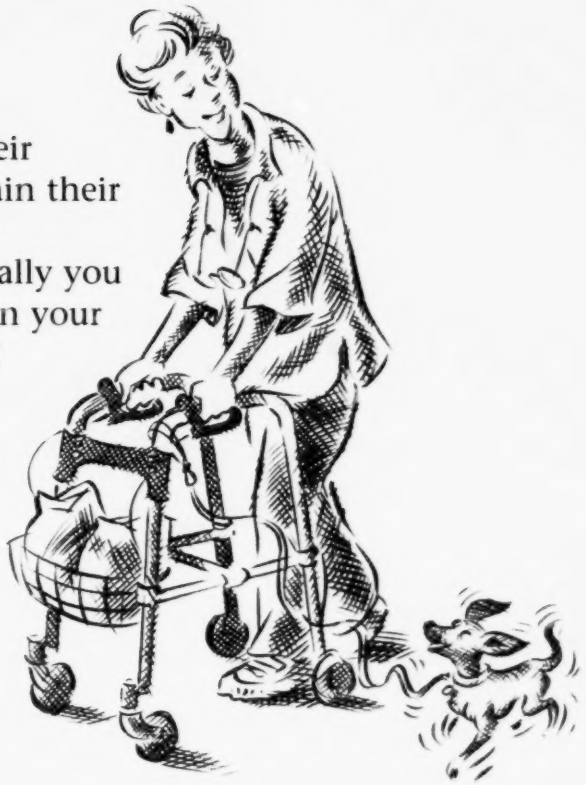
Finding new ways

If you want to continue with your daily activities and functions but can't handle them in the same way as your friends, you can try to find another way to carry them out. Sound complicated? It's not.

Marion used to enjoy walking to the mailbox with her letters, but now the walk is too difficult. So she's started to use the computer to send her letters by electronic mail. Her activity (sending letters) is maintained using a different function (computer rather than Canada Post).

New perceptions

Thousands of Canadians have improved their lifestyle by using assistive devices to maintain their independence, conserve energy and reduce dependence on family and caregivers. Initially you may find the inclusion of assistive devices in your life to be difficult but it's all in the attitude!



Yours and others' perception of your disability and of assistive devices has an impact on your self-confidence, your social relations and your ability to cope with activities. Make sure you talk openly about your concerns, issues and feelings, and encourage your family and friends to do the same.

Next steps

Whether you opt to "do it the same way" or "find a new way," remember that you're in control of the process. It's your life!

The service delivery system in your province may help you obtain the right assistive device for you. Be prepared by:

1. **Obtaining all the information** you can on assistive devices.
2. **Knowing your rights** vis-à-vis the service delivery system in your province (see Chapter 2).
3. **Clarifying your needs and goals** with the help of service providers/advisors/experts (see Chapter 3).
4. **Getting** the facts and carefully defining your preferences.
5. Knowing that advisors can not always give you all the complete and necessary information: **budget limits and costs often come into play**.

6. **Remembering that vendors are not philanthropic**; they want to earn money, so beware the "sales pitch."

7. **Knowing that funding programs are limited**, and assistive devices can often be expensive.

8. **Enquiring about other sources of funding** assistance that are available to you.

9. **Using a peer counsellor** or bringing a friend, when possible.

10. **Networking** with local organizations for seniors or persons with a disability (a listing of some of these organizations can be found in Appendix 1).

Chapter 2

How does the system work?

How does the system work?

The service delivery system is simply the link between your needs and obtaining the appropriate assistive devices.

The system is different from province to province. It's also different depending on whether or not you have financial resources at your disposal. Consult your family doctor, medical specialist, your provincial Ministry of Health, Regional Health Authority and/or Veterans Affairs Canada for specific information on the process in your region. Some provincial and territorial addresses are provided in Appendix 1 at the end of this publication.

Steps involved

While every individual's experience with the service delivery system is unique and varies according to the province, in general there are seven steps involved:

1. Initiative
2. Assessment
3. Service planning
4. Selection
5. Funding
6. Delivery
7. Management and follow-up

The example of "Ms. Canada," below, illustrates the steps of the service delivery process.

1. ***Initiative***

   Ms. Canada can't get in or out of the bathtub by herself, and she doesn't want her family to be involved.

   She visits her family doctor to express her need (i.e., Ms. Canada takes the initiative to begin the service delivery process).

   While Ms. Canada took the initiative herself, your own case may be different. It might be your family, your doctor, a social worker, a physiotherapist or others who take the initiative on your behalf. You could also turn to a hospital, a local organization for seniors or even a rehabilitation clinic.

2. ***Assessment***

   The doctor, however, wasn't able to assess Ms. Canada's need but he knew where she could get help and referred her to a specialist at a local health care centre.

3. ***Service planning***

   After Ms. Canada's needs were identified, a list of the functional requirements of the needed assistive devices was completed.

4. ***Selection***

   Knowing her needs and her requirements, the advisor was now able to select the appropriate products: grab bars to be mounted on the walls around the bathtub, and a seat to be placed in the bathtub.

   Ms. Canada bought her grab bars and bath seat secondhand from an equipment vendor store.

5. ***Funding***

   Depending on the assistive device and your situation, you may be able to obtain

Getting what you need

It's not always necessary to visit a health care centre to get what you need. Many assistive devices – canes, raised toilet seats, grab rails, etc. – can be found at your local pharmacy or hardware store!

financial assistance from your provincial or territorial government to purchase the assistive device you need. Some provinces and territories have programs available for seniors or persons with a disability to help them purchase assistive devices at a reasonable cost, or obtain them on loan.

If you're a veteran, Veterans Affairs Canada may be able to provide you with assistance.

You can also contact local chapters of service clubs or national organizations such as the Kiwanis, Rotary or Lions Club, the Royal Canadian Legion or the Canadian National Institute for the Blind to inquire about funding assistance. Your family and friends may also want to lend a hand.

Devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, and reachers are available from stores that sell "medical supplies." A list of stores can be found in the yellow pages. Items such as bath seats or canes are also available at pharmacies. Consider borrowing or renting the device before buying it to make sure it suits your needs. The Canadian Red Cross provides this service in many locations across Canada.

6. ***Delivery***

   The ordered products were delivered to Ms. Canada's home, where they were installed by a technician.

7. ***Management and follow-up***

   After a month, the professional advisor revisited Ms. Canada to see whether the assistive devices were fulfilling her needs.

Get involved!

The service delivery system must allow you to take an active part in assessing and selecting the devices that meet your specific needs. It's important that you make your opinions clear so you get the best result for **you**!

Chapter 3

How can I decide?

How can I decide?

This chapter provides you with a step-by-step process for **clarifying your needs and setting your goals** for assistive technology. In addition, it offers advice that will help you gain a greater sense of control in obtaining assistive devices.

Steps involved

There are four general steps involved in determining what assistive technology you will need:

1. Defining your needs: what is necessary/important for you in order to do what you want?
2. Defining your goals: how do you want your solutions to work?
3. Reviewing options and solutions.
4. Selecting the right solutions: testing out and making decisions among possible alternatives.

Marion's Story

Marion slipped on the ice last winter and broke her right hip. She's had surgery and now her hip no longer has the range of motion it used to. The doctors have done their best but Marion's hip will never be quite the same again. Marion walks insecurely and she can't sit in an ordinary chair or drive her car. She suffers psychologically as well and is afraid of falling and going outside.

What's more, her knees have begun to ache when she walks and her right leg no longer functions as it did before her fall. As she suspects the situation will not improve, she will need assistive technology to live an independent life.

Marion wants to be sure to get the right solutions and begins the process of obtaining personal assistive technology.

Defining needs

To reach an eventual decision, it's important to prepare a detailed description of your daily activities from all points of view. This allows you to find out which activities give you trouble (your needs) and examine the best ways to find solutions (your goals).

The following pages provide the forms used by Marion to describe and analyze her daily activities. For your convenience, a blank version of the forms (and instructions to fill them out) are provided in Appendix 2. You can use Marion's list as a guide, but make sure you adapt the form to your own life and activities. Once you've completed the analysis of your own situation, you'll be ready to go on to the next step.

Defining goals

Once Marion had defined her needs using the form, she was able to identify important factors:

- Pain and lack of balance are her most common problems.
- She wishes to get around safely.
- She wants to do personal activities like washing, going to the toilet, dressing, eating, etc., by herself.
- There are some areas where she would not mind getting help or hiring someone else to complete the tasks.

Kitchen

STEP 1 - Identifying your needs				*STEP 2 - Defining your goals*
Activity	**Trouble**	**Why**	**Importance (1, 2 or 3)***	**Possible Solution**
Preparing food	Standing too long and carrying things to table	Pain & balance problems	2	Sit at table to work. Use a kitchen trolley. Meals on wheels.
Setting and clearing the table	Can't carry things well	Balance problems	2	Use a kitchen trolley. Get help.
Eating meals	Trouble sitting too long	Pain	3	Look into special cushions for chairs.
Washing up and storing dishes	Can't stand long or carry things	Pain & balance problems	2	Use dishwasher. Use a kitchen trolley. Get help.
Paying the bills	Trouble sitting too long	Pain	2	Look into special cushions for chairs.

Bathroom

STEP 1 - Identifying your needs				*STEP 2 - Defining your goals*
Activity	**Trouble**	**Why**	**Importance (1, 2 or 3)***	**Possible Solution**
Using the toilet	Trouble sitting on toilet and getting up	Pain & stiffness in hips	3	Raised toilet seat and grab bars.
Brushing teeth, using sink	Can't stand for long periods of time	Pain & balance problems	3	Seat or stool in front of sink; tilt mirror so that I can see.
Bathing or showering	Getting in and out of tub, standing in tub	Fear of falling due to stiffness & balance	3	Grab bars and bath seat.
Make-up	Can't stand for long periods of time	Pain & balance problems	3	Seat or stool in front of sink; tilt mirror so I can see.
Hair care, colouring my hair and blow-drying my hair	Can't stand for long periods of time	Pain & balance problems	2	Seat or stool in front of sink; tilt mirror so I can see. Get hair done.

***Importance Rating:** 1 = You don't care whether you can do it yourself or at all.
2 = You're willing to accept help.
3 = It's very important for you to do this yourself.

Outside the Home

STEP 1 - Identifying your needs				*STEP 2 - Defining your goals*
Activity	**Trouble**	**Why**	**Importance (1, 2 or 3)***	**Possible Solution**
Gardening	Trouble getting down on knees to work on the ground	Painful knees	2	Hire someone to do flower beds. Hang flower baskets around deck railing for my enjoyment and for easy access.
Managing steps	Can't handle front steps	Balance problems	3	Put railing on stairs or investigate landscaping to make door level.
Home maintenance	Too much heavy work	Can't handle lawn-mower or tools	1	Hire neighbourhood teen to help out.
Shopping	Trouble walking long distances	Pain & exhaustion	3	Consider carpooling or using a wheeled walker with seat and basket.
Transportation	Can't drive my car	Pain & stiffness	2	Carpooling with neighbours.
Walking, outdoor leisure activities	Trouble walking long distances	Pain & exhaustion	3	Walker with seat.
Volunteer work or education activities	Hard time sitting while volunteering at front desk at Seniors Centre	Pain	3	Bring a lightweight, specialized cushion to make seat more comfortable.

Recreation & Social Areas

STEP 1 - Identifying your needs				*STEP 2 - Defining your goals*
Activity	**Trouble**	**Why**	**Importance (1, 2 or 3)***	**Possible Solution**
Using the telephone	Standing next to phone to talk	Pain standing too long	3	Get cordless phone that I can take to my comfortable chair to talk.
Using the computer	Difficult to sit for long time	Pain	3	Get more comfortable com-puter chair and limit time.
Playing bridge, Tai Chi class	Some difficulty sitting during cards	Pain & balance	3	Cushion for chair while playing cards. Tai Chi seems to be helping balance.

***Importance Rating:** **1** = You don't care whether you can do it yourself or at all.
2 = You're willing to accept help.
3 = It's very important for you to do this yourself.

(continued from page 17)

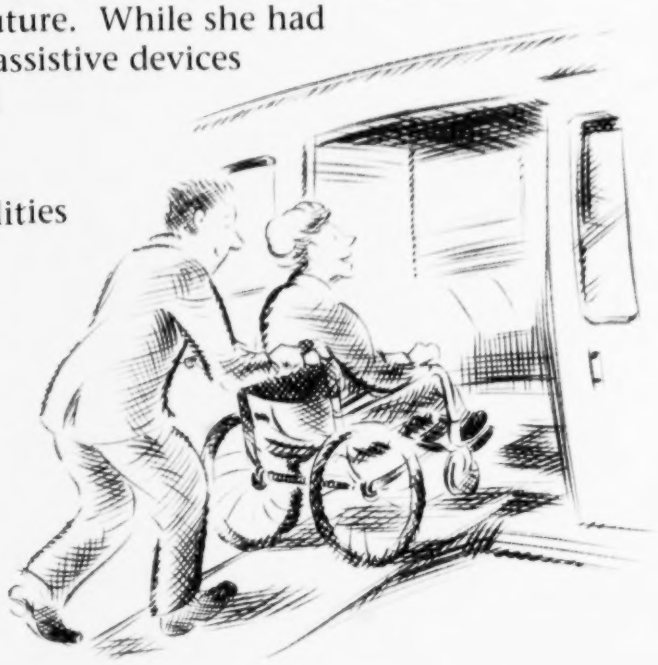
- She wouldn't mind using some assistive devices if they are functional and non-intrusive.
- It's important for her to continue doing her volunteer activities.
- She wants to be able to maintain her several leisure activities.

In the end, solutions must allow Marion to do the activities she finds most important, and they must allow her to keep her dignity and maintain her volunteer and leisure activities.

Reviewing the options

Marion is the expert on her own activities and what she wants today and in the future. While she had some idea of the various assistive devices available, she had limited knowledge about:

- the breadth of possibilities
- the latest models
- ways of changing routines
- methods of performance
- availability
- benefits



Her next step was to contact people who know more about assistive devices and accessibility and who could help her make informed decisions on the best options and solutions. For each activity, she needed to consider if her goals could be reached through therapy/rehabilitation, changing the surroundings, having assistive devices or using a personal assistant.

But before she contacted an expert she did some investigation on her own. She talked to a friend who works as a nurse. Afterwards she visited the library to search information on assessments and overviews of assistive devices.

The material was limited, but she discovered the addresses of local organizations for seniors and persons with a disability. Through contacting them, she learned more about the process of getting assistive devices. She learned about exhibits where products are shown. Through a municipal organization, she linked with a woman with similar problems who advised her from personal experience. She searched the Internet and found vendors and other information on assistive devices.

Well informed, she visited the local health care centre, bringing her personal list of activities and goals. There, she met an occupational therapist called Karen, who is an advisor on assessment and therapy/rehabilitation; Karen knows what assistive technology is available and if necessary, works with other specialists such as physiotherapists, psychologists, speech therapists, and social workers.

Karen began by assessing Marion's mobility: how strong she is, how well her joints bend, how safe and stable her movements are. Then, using the analysis of activities forms Marion had brought with her, they reviewed her activities, her future situation and the accessibility of her surroundings; they discussed the possibility of rehabilitation solutions and explored ways of changing her routine in order to avoid pain and fatigue; they even talked about the possibility of a personal assistant. Together, they reached agreement on Marion's

Personal assistants

In some situations it might be more beneficial for you to have a personal assistant than to use assistive devices. This applies in situations where so much of your own energy is used on one activity that you have no strength left for other activities, or in situations where no assistive device can help manage what you need done.

Assistants can be your family, friends or colleagues (informal helpers). You can also use job-contract assistants who are paid by you or by government or insurance. This varies from province to province.

Regardless of whether they're paid or family personal assistants, it's important to give them honest information and training in the best way to assist you.

Terms of sale, written guarantees

When you buy an assistive device, be sure to get a guide or handbook for its use, cleaning and maintenance, and ask about the process of getting proper training in its use. These issues, as well as conditions of sale and warranty, are especially important when getting a complicated or expensive assistive device like a wheelchair, car adaptation or communication aid. Get a written sales agreement, with:

- specific description of the assistive device
- description of special adaptations
- description of special equipment and accessories
- precise time of delivery
- notes about free repairs during the warranty period, including duration for these repairs, substitution of the assistive device during the time of repair, and paying of transport during the time of repair
- warranty period, exclusions if modified, and the availability of spare parts after delivery
- maintenance and service agreements
- sales price with clear definition of what it covers (special adaptations, accessories, repairs in the warranty period)
- how the payment is executed
- other issues relevant for you

personal goals and began to look for relevant assistive devices. They selected a number of them to try and looked over the vendor catalogues on hand in the health centre.

The centre also had a number of products available that could be borrowed to test at home. This is especially important in the case of wheeled walkers or wheelchairs.

Karen visited Marion's home to see her actual surroundings and the way she manages her different activities. Although Marion had been thorough in her activity analysis, as a professional, Karen found a few additional problem areas.

After this meeting, the selected assistive devices were brought to her home and installed, and Marion was trained in their use until she felt secure.

Within a month Marion realized a couple of the assistive devices did not suit her

needs and she contacted Karen to discuss these problems and find better solutions.

After two months, Marion came to the conclusion that she *did* require a wheelchair for her outings and with the help of Karen, began the assessment process to obtain the right wheelchair.

A follow-up appointment was scheduled three months later to check that everything was functioning, to assess the solutions put in place, and to discuss any new problems.

The quality of Marion's daily life is much improved!

Selecting the right solutions

When testing devices it's important to be thorough and consider the following questions:

- Does it solve your problem?
- Does it fulfil your needs?
- If not, can you exchange it?
- Is it well designed and easy to use?
- Do you like it?
- Is it easy for your personal assistant to use?
- Can you manage to clean it yourself? If not, who can?
- Can you manage the maintenance yourself? If not, who can?
- Can you handle repairing it yourself? If not, who can?
- Do you have the instructions?
- Can you be trained on its use?
- Can you easily get help and advice if you have problems with the assistive technology?

- If the assistive device breaks can you get a substitute quickly?
- Can you afford it?
- Do you have room to store it when not in use?
- Will it fit? (e.g., through the door, in your car, etc.)

If the answers to some of these questions are "no," it's important to discuss the problems with your advisor to find a better solution or change the conditions.

Easy as pie?

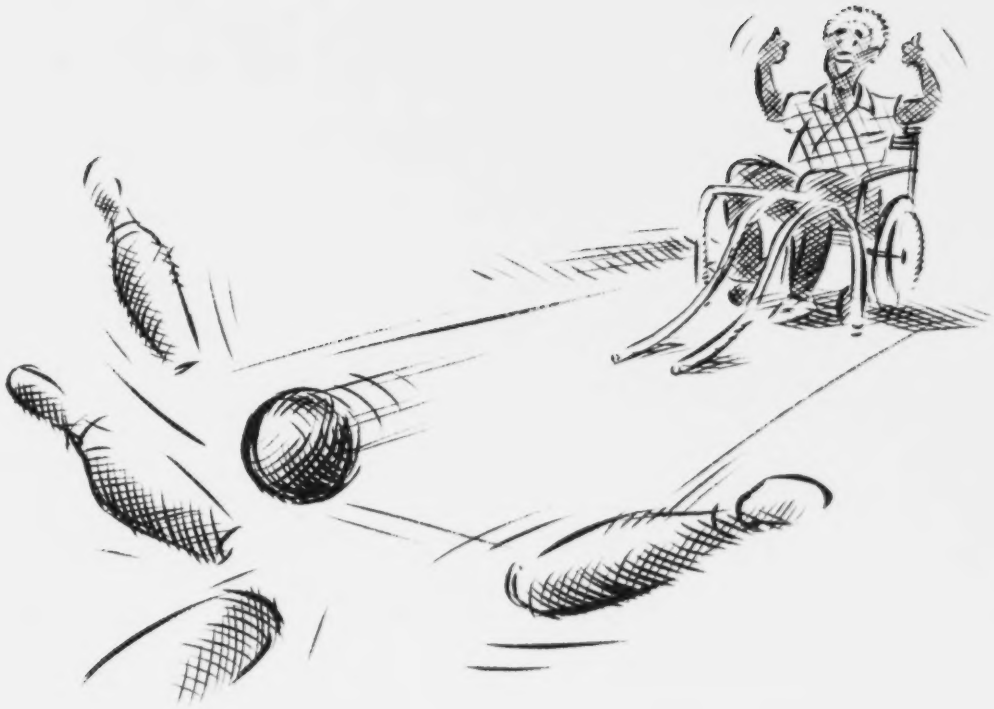
The process of getting assistive devices in "real life" is not always easy. You may find it difficult to collaborate with your advisor, impossible to find the right solution for your problems, or challenging to get the funding you need for the device you want.

What's more, having the right device and using it for a while is not always a story of success. Testing different devices and adaptations is often necessary before you find the best solution for you. Even then, sometimes only parts of your goals may be met.

Assistive technology offers you new possibilities, but at the same time it might give you constraints (e.g., if your computer for communication breaks down, you will be unable to communicate for a period of time).

The process of getting advanced and complicated assistive devices like electric wheelchairs or computerized communication aids can be a long journey for both the user and the advisor. And then, starting your new life with an assistive device might still cause problems, which you will have to manage and solve.

Persevere. You deserve it!



Chapter 4

What is available?

What is available?

This chapter highlights some of the available assistive devices and their uses.

It's not intended as a complete catalogue: the market of assistive devices changes rapidly and every day a new technology appears that could open dramatic new possibilities for people with activity challenges. Stay informed and subscribe to an assistive technology magazine or visit websites on assistive devices. A new solution could be a day away!

There are assistive technologies in every area of human activity:

Communication aids — devices to help you write, read, talk, hear and telephone, equipment to help you listen to the radio or watch television, personal emergency response systems, etc.

Cognition aids — turn-on/turn-off timers, illustrative calendars, tape-recorded books and newspapers, etc.

Personal care aids — devices to help you wash, bathe and shower, equipment to help you dress, undress and use the toilet, incontinence aids, etc.

Personal mobility aids — devices to help you walk, transfer, turn and lift, equipment to help you climb stairs, wheelchairs, bikes, modified vehicles, etc.

Housekeeping aids — utensils to help you cook and eat, devices to help you clean the house, do the laundry, etc.

Adaptations to homes and other premises — devices to help you enter, leave and get around in the house, get in and out of bed and control the environment, modified furnishings, etc.

Recreation aids — devices to help you participate in sports and fitness, and a variety of other recreational activities.

Communication aids

We all have a need to communicate with other people. Normally, we communicate by talking or writing to each other but much communication takes place when we listen, watch, sense, read or use sign language. If you have lost some of your ability to talk or write, a number of alternative measures are available to compensate for the loss.

Writing

Consider:

- thick pens or pens wrapped in plastic/rubber tubing, if you have difficulty holding items
- pens made of chunky, easy-to-grip materials
- heavier pens, which help achieve precision if you have shaky hands
- clearly lined paper and a thick ballpoint tip, if you have visual impairments
- a computer

Using computers

Consider:

- adapted keyboards and mice
- a magnifying program, if you have visual impairments
- voice-recognition software which types by responding to voice commands and words

Reading

Consider:

- brighter lighting
- a magnifier
- a magnifier with built-in light
- a table-mounted newspaper stand
- a slanting board resting on the desk or table, or placed on a book stand, fitted onto the arms of the chair, or on a movable stand which you can wheel around
- a page-turner fitted with a large easy-to-grip handle on one end and a rubber grip on the other
- an electric page-turner — some of those can be adapted to act on the touch of a finger, a whole-hand grip, a foot, an elbow, chin, or by blowing or pulling a string
- a tape recorder, if you want to read taped books or newspapers

Talking

Consider:

- a speech-device typewriter, where messages are typed on the keyboard and displayed on a small screen or on paper strips
- a word-saving talking machine, where saved vocabulary (and a number of phrases) is played when a relevant picture, word or symbol is pushed

- a typewriter
- a computer equipped with artificial speech, word-banks, or phrase-banks
- a letter and symbol board
- a voice amplifier (if you have a tracheotomy)

Hearing

Consider:

- a hearing aid
- a headset with a built-in volume control
- a flashing light to signal when your doorbell or telephone rings

Telephoning

A wide range of telephones and devices to assist in the use of the telephone is available, whether you have visual impairments, are hard of hearing, need a voice amplifier, have difficulty remembering telephone numbers or are mobility impaired.

Consider:

- a keyboard with extra large numbers attached to the telephone
- a telephone with memory keys, available with raised keys and extra large figures
- marking keys in different colours, or with photos or drawings
- a voice-operated telephone
- a loud ringer or a flashing light on the telephone, if you are hard of hearing
- a teletypewriter (TTY) or telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD)

Personal emergency response systems

If you are mobility impaired and live alone, security and safety alarms are available. Such systems consist of an alarm, activated by the touch of a button, connected to your telephone. The alarm button can be worn on a necklace or in a pocket. When activated, the alarm is received at the alarm provider's call centre. Some alarm systems offer the possibility of direct contact with emergency services staff.

You could also consider using a cell phone, which you can carry on you at all times.

Listening to the radio and watching television

Consider:

- a large remote control with large colour contrasted buttons
- an environmental control, which enables you to work not only radio and television, but also light, doors etc., while sitting in your chair
- a television-screen magnifier
- activating the captioning on your television

Cognition aids

There's a great variety of technologies available for people with cognitive disabilities.

Consider:

- an ordinary or homemade calendar with pictures for days and activities
- an alarm clock set to ring to remind you of important activities
- a turn-on/turn-off timer set to turn off stoves or other electrical devices
- using pictures to label cooking and cleaning items
- using pictures to label contents of cupboards or closets

- tape-recording instructions or directions for recipes
- tape-recorded books and newspapers
- a cell phone to use in case you get lost (with friends or family numbers preprogrammed and identified with colours or small pictures)

Personal care aids

Washing, bathing and showering

Consider:

- thermostat mixer-taps
- grab bars mounted in the shower/bath to ease sitting down and getting up
- a floor-fitted support rail
- a bath seat, with or without back support, arm rails or wheels
- a bath board
- installing non-slip strips on the bathtub floor
- padded seats
- a shower handset
- a barrier-free shower stall

Washing hands and face

Consider:

- an adjustable washbasin
- an electrically operated washbasin
- tap fixtures with extended handles

Using combs, bath brush, etc.

Consider:

- large or angled handles

- wrapping handles in soft foam material
- toe-washers

Dressing and undressing

Consider:

- comfortable clothes with generous sleeve-holes
- clothes with front fasteners, such as a front-fastening bra
- clothes made from slippery material and clothes with slippery linings
- clothes with elastic waists
- a dressing stick or hook
- a reacher

Using buttons and zippers

Consider:

- purchasing/modifying clothes with buttons and button holes which are easy to do up
- a button hook
- replacing buttons and button holes with velcro fasteners
- a zip puller loop attached to the zipper
- zippers in the seams of your clothing, if you have severely reduced strength or if you have a prosthesis

Putting on and removing socks and shoes

Consider:

- putting your foot on a footstool
- a sock puller or rubber gloves for putting on socks, stockings or tights
- a long-handled shoehorn
- wearing shoes without laces
- wearing shoes with velcro or elasticized laces

Using the toilet

Consider:

- a raised toilet seat mounted on the existing toilet
- a raised toilet
- mounting the existing toilet on a raised base
- a toilet chair, wheeled over the existing toilet
- a raised toilet seat with a forward-slanting seat
- fitting arm rails on the toilet wall, or in the floor
- a motor-operated adjustable toilet seat
- ergonomically designed toilet seats with open fronts, extra widths, etc.
- inflatable seats or seats made of soft fibre-filled materials
- toilet paper tongs
- toilets with built-in bidets and air-dryer function
- bedside commodes, with or without wheels

Incontinence

If you suffer from incontinence, it's important to obtain a complete medical assessment as, in addition to assistive devices, other solutions are available (training, medication or an operation).

Consider:

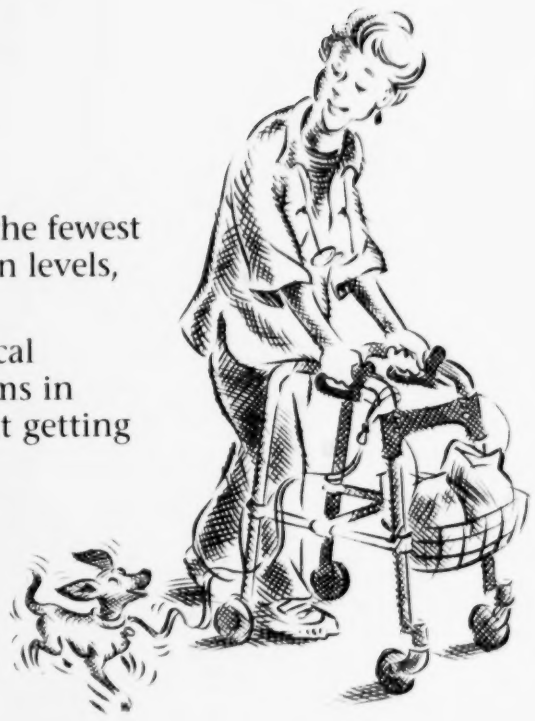
- adult diapers, pads or protective undergarments
- ostomy supplies or catheters
- protective trousers and pads designed for chairs and beds
- waterproof lining sheets or waterproof mattress cover (be aware of skin allergies)

Personal mobility aids

Support for walking

Consider:

- wearing a hip protector
- custom-made orthotics
- choosing streets/routes with the fewest obstacles (stairs, a difference in levels, heavy doors, etc.)
- advocating: speak to your local politician about your problems in order to stress how important getting around is to you
- a cane or walking stick
- a frame walker
- a rollator (wheeled walker)
- a trolley



Wheelchairs & scooters

There are many types of wheelchairs and scooters (motorized wheelchairs) available. The points below should be considered a simple overview of things to consider when deciding whether or not a wheelchair or a scooter is right for you.

Consider:

- Do you want a manual or electric wheelchair?
- Will you use it outdoors, indoors, or both?
- Will you transport it in a car? a van? (i.e., does it need to be collapsible and/or lightweight?)
- Will your wheelchair be pushed by someone else?
- Do you need a sport or high performance wheelchair?
- Can you control the wheelchair yourself or, for instance, will you need computerized steering?
- Will you need assistance standing?
- Where you will store it?

Bed transfer, turning and lifting activities

Consider:

- a transfer board
- a turning disc
- glide sheets or glide cushions
- a lifting pole, available in many models for beds, chairs and bathtubs
- a mobile hoist, available in either hydraulic/manual-operated or electric operated models (note: lifting by a hoist always needs an assistant)
- a standing hoist
- a footstool or lowering the bed

Biking

Consider:

- an adult tricycle
- a tandem bike, which can be used by people with visual impairments or disabilities
- a hand-driven bike, if you have little or no force in the legs
- attaching a small help-engine to the bike

Driving

Consider:

- a vehicle fitted for your wheelchair
- a personal assistant to do the driving
- having a vehicle adapted for your use with specialized hand controls for driving
- alternative transport if you can no longer drive

Climbing staircases

Consider:

- railings
- a wheelchair specially constructed to climb stairs
- a stair lift
- an elevator

Housekeeping aids

Arranging the kitchen

Consider:

- a turning space of 170 X 170 cm (67 X 67 inches), minimum, to accommodate wheelchair users
- lowered oven and sink areas for easier access
- lowered cupboards, counters and electrical outlets
- side-opening oven door
- installing a heat-resistant counter top on which to push hot pans and baking trays
- insulating underneath the sink, if you are a wheelchair user without tactile sensation in your legs
- installing glass cupboards so you can see their contents

Cooking

Consider:

- an adjustable stool and a trolley for transferring things
- if you have limited vision, using contrasting colours as it makes items easier to distinguish (food, dishes, and utensils)
- using electric kitchen tools, such as the food-processor for chopping, blending, and whisking, electric kettles, egg-boilers, potato peelers, etc.
- automatic switch-off devices if you find it difficult to remember to turn things off

- pot and pan holders which extend the length and improve the grip of existing handles
- cooking baskets to avoid lifting heavy pans
- pot minders/watchers (small metal plates which make bubbling noises when liquid boils)
- kitchen tongs
- long barbeque mitts to protect yourself when carrying hot pots and pans
- a stool to sit on in front of the counter to perform tasks

Kitchen utensils

Consider:

- a special preparation board (with pegs to hold food, suction cups to keep the board steady and/or clamps) if you only have the use of one hand or cannot grip things
- a buttering board with raised L-shaped or angle-shaped edges in one corner, if you are only able to use one hand
- utensils with angle-shaped and easy-to-grip handles
- a carving apparatus
- table- or wall-mounted graters and peelers, and jar, bottle, cap or can openers
- peelers and vegetable brushes with suction pads
- electric, or easy-grip can openers

Measuring and weighing

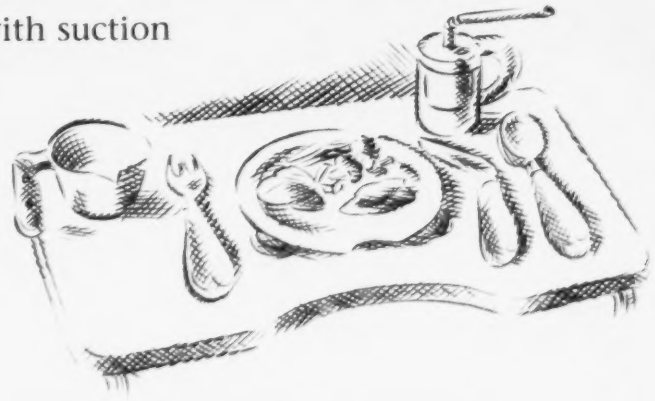
Consider:

- purchasing scales and measuring cups with large, clearly visible figures
- using large-handle measuring spoons and cups

Eating

Consider:

- placing a non-slip material under dishes to keep them from slipping
- dishes and egg cups with suction pads
- vacuum-fixed dishes
- dishes with raised edges or an inward turning rim



Cutlery

Consider:

- cutlery that is chunky and large but with lightweight handles
- cutlery with angle-shaped or extended handles
- L-shaped knives
- cutlery with self-shaping handles
- heavy cutlery if your hands are shaky
- combi-cutlery if you only have the use of one hand
- cutlery adjusted with straps

Cups, mugs, and glasses

Consider:

- glassware with one or two large, generous handles
- glassware with lids and spouts
- plastic wineglasses with thick stems
- heavy glassware if you have shaky hands
- glassware with anti-splash tops
- insulated glassware, if you have reduced tactile sensitivity
- glassware with straight or flexible straws
- straws with non-return valves in their tips to ensure they remain filled with liquid

- an easy-tip kettle, or thermos with a pump, if you find it difficult to lift tea or coffee pots

Taking medicine

Consider:

- a pill box opener
- a pill cutter and tablet presser, which can press a pill from the packet
- a pill organizer with dividers for each day of the week to hold your medicines
- keeping track of your doses and medication on a calendar
- an accessible storage area

Cleaning

Consider:

- fitting cupboards with shelves, hooks, etc. at a height comfortable for you
- attaching sliding studs under the furniture if floors are carpeted, or small felt pads if floors are bare
- long-handled mops, brushes and vacuum cleaners
- a wheeled trolley to carry filled buckets and supplies
- attaching a spray head to your sink to fill buckets
- cloths made of soft, absorbent material, which are easier to wring
- absorbent sponges
- hiring housecleaning help to perform the tasks you find difficult (this service may be provided by some local community centres)

Vacuum cleaning

Consider:

- a self-winding cable
- a lightweight model, or one on wheels
- on/off switches located on the top of the units to avoid bending

- models with adjustable hose handles
- models with asthma filters if you have asthma or are allergic to dust

- a small lightweight carpet sweeper
- installing a central vac

Doing the laundry

Consider:

- washer and dryer control panels with touch-operated buttons and front-end loading
- sock-locks, which lock the socks together during washing and drying
- a wall-mounted ironing board
- installing the washer and dryer on the main floor

Adaptations to homes and other premises

Entering/leaving the house

Consider:

- installing rails or a grip
- roll-up, folding, telescopic, or portable ramps, or adjustable doorsteps
- properly lighting the driveway, foot path, and the stairs
- automatic door openers
- sliding doors

Getting around inside the house

Consider:

- adapting the environment by reviewing doorway widths and thresholds, floor coverings, passageway width, bathrooms and toilets
- ramps, stair lifts, floor lifts or hoists
- installing grab rails; models are available with long, short, narrow or broad grabs, different surfaces, fastened in different ways, specialized for corridors, kitchen, bath, toilet, sitting-room, and specialized for specific conditions and diseases
- electrically operated doors, operated by foot or hand switch, a pressure mat or a movement sensor
- environmental controls which can open and lock doors and windows, switch on and off lights, radios, computers, etc.

Sleeping and waking

Consider:

- a bed table to hold a telephone, an alarm clock, and books
- an alarm clock with large, clearly visible figures and chunky, clearly visible hands
- if you are hard of hearing, loudly ringing alarm clocks, or clocks connected to lights or a vibrator placed under the pillow

The bed

Consider:

- a lifting pole or a bed rope ladder, if you find it difficult to rise up or turn around
- a solid bed rail or a wall-mounted hand rail
- free standing lifting poles or a pole for mounting on the bed
- adjustable beds
- glide cushions or glide sheets

- a bed wedge or pillow raiser if you have difficulty lying flat
- a special mattress which allows pressure to be spread evenly to alleviate pressure sores
- waterproof lining sheets or a waterproof mattress cover if you are incontinent (but be aware of skin allergies)

Recreation aids

Participating in sports and fitness

Consider:

- joining sport leagues and clubs for seniors or persons with a disability
- purchasing specialized assistive devices for running, basketball, tennis, horseback riding, etc.

Playing games

Consider:

- games with magnetic backs, or in extra large sizes
- playing games on the computer
- card holders, and battery-operated card shufflers

Doing needlework

Consider:

- sprung scissors, electric scissors, or scissors fitted on boards resting on a table
- an embroidery frame
- electric knitting and sewing machines
- adjustable magnifiers

Gardening

Consider:

- smooth, firm garden paths
- raising garden beds
- automatic watering systems
- a garden kneeler
- garden tools fitted with special handles

Go for it!

You're now aware of the great diversity of assistive devices available. Keep in mind that whatever your needs and choices are, environmental accessibility, activity analysis, personal adaptations, training and follow-up play a huge role in getting satisfaction out of the assistive devices that are right for **you**.

Appendix 1

Contact information

The following sources may help you in your search for solutions. This information can change. Consult your telephone yellow/blue pages for the most current information.

Provincial and territorial contact information

Alberta

Aids to Daily Living
toll-free: 310-0000 and ask for (780) 427-0731
Alberta Health & Wellness
toll-free: 310-0000 and ask for (780) 427-1432

British Columbia

Ministry of Health Services
Medical Services Plan
toll-free: 1-800-465-4911
local: (250) 952-1742
Ministry of Human Resources, Enhanced Medical Coverage
Health Benefits Branch:
toll-free: 1-888-221-7711
Disability Benefits:
toll-free: 1-800-337-3531

Manitoba

Manitoba Health Office
Ancillary Programs, Insured Benefits Branch
toll-free: 1-800-392-1207, ext. 7365
TDD/TTY: (204) 786-7132
Home Care Equipment Program
local: (204) 945-8611

New Brunswick

Department of Family & Community Services
local: (506) 453-3953

Newfoundland and Labrador

Health & Community Services
local: (709) 729-4984

Northwest Territories

Department of Health & Social Services
Health Benefits Coordinator
toll-free: 1-800-661-0830
local: (867) 777-7400
Extended Health Benefits Program for Seniors, Health Insurance Services Division
Zenith 06025 (no charge if calling within the NWT)

Nova Scotia

Department of Health
toll-free: 1-800-225-7225

Nunavut

Department of Health & Social Services
local: (867) 975-5700

Ontario

Ministry of Health & Long Term Care Infoline
local: (416) 327-4327
TDD/TYY: 1-800-387-5559
toll-free: 1-800-268-1153
Assistive Devices & Home Oxygen Program
local: (416) 327-8804
TDD/TTY: 1-800-387-5559
toll-free: 1-800-268-6021

Prince Edward Island

Acute and Continuing Care
16 Garfield Street
P.O. Box 2000
Charlottetown, P.E.I. C1A 7N8
local: (902) 368-6134
Division of Aging & Extended Care
local: (902) 368-4900

Quebec

Ministry of Health & Social Services
toll-free: 1-800-707-3380
Health Insurance Plan
toll-free: 1-800-561-9749
Québec: (418) 646-4636
Montréal: (514) 864-3411

Saskatchewan

Health Insurance Registration Branch
local: (306) 787-3475
toll-free: 1-800-667-7551
Aids to Independent Living Program
local: (306) 787-7121

Yukon

Department of Health & Social Services
toll-free: 1-800-661-0408
Extended Health Care Benefits to Seniors Program
local: (867) 667-5403

Organizations for seniors/persons with a disability

Active Living Alliance
20 Belfast Rd.
Suite 104
Ottawa, ON K1G 0Z5
toll-free: 1-800-771-0663
local: (613) 244-0052
fax: (613) 244-4857
www.ala.ca

Active Living Coalition for Older Adults
33 Laird Drive
Toronto, ON M4G 3S9
toll-free: 1-800-549-9799
local: (416) 423-2069
fax: (416) 423-2112
www.alcoa.ca

Quebec Alliance of Retirees and Seniors Associations
Cummings Jewish Seniors Centre
3 Cummings Square
Montréal, QC H3W 3E8
local: (514) 342-1234
fax: (514) 739-6899

The Arthritis Society
393 University Avenue, Suite 1700
Toronto, ON M5G 1E6
local: (416) 979-7228
fax: (416) 979-8366
www.arthritis.ca

Assemblée des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada
P.O. Box 198
Pointe-de-l'Église, NS B0W 1M0
local: (902) 837-1081
fax: (902) 837-1082
www.franco.ca/aafc

Assistive Devices Industry Office (ADIO)
Industry Canada
toll-free: 1-800-328-6189
local: (613) 990-4316
www.strategis.ic.gc.ca/adio

Association québécoise de défense des droits des personnes retraitées et préretraitées (AQDR)
1931 Sherbrooke Street West
Montréal, QC H3H 1E3
local: (514) 935-1551
fax: (514) 937-7371
www.aqdr.qc.ca

Canada's Association for the 50+ (CARP)
1304 - 27 Queen Street East
Toronto, ON M5C 2M6
toll-free: 1-800-363-9736
local: (416) 363-8748
fax: (416) 363-8747
www.fifty-plus.net

Canadian Abilities Foundation
489 College Street, Suite 501
Toronto, ON M6G 1A5
local: (416) 923-1885
fax: (416) 923-9829
www.enablelink.org

Canadian Association on Gerontology
824 Meath Street, Suite 100
Ottawa, ON K1Z 6E8
local: (613) 728-9347
fax: (613) 728-8913
www.cagacg.ca

Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres
Suite 1104 - 170 Laurier Ave. West
Ottawa, ON K1P 5V5
local: (613) 563-2581
fax: (613) 563-3861
www.cailc.ca

Canadian Health Network
10th Floor, Jeanne Mance Building
Ottawa, ON K1A 1B4
www.canadian-health-network.ca

Canadian Hearing Society
271 Spadina Road
Toronto, ON M5R 2V3
toll-free: 1-877-347-3427
local: (416) 964-9595
fax: (416) 928-2506
local TTY: (416) 964-0023
toll-free TTY: 1-877-347-3429
www.chs.ca

Canadian National Institute for the Blind
National Office
1929 Bayview Avenue
Toronto, ON M4G 3E8
local: (416) 486-2500
fax: (416) 480-7677
www.cnib.ca

Canadian Paraplegic Association
520 Sutherland Drive
Toronto, ON M4G 3V9
toll-free: 1-877-422-1112
local: (416) 422-5644
fax: (416) 422-5943
www.canparaplegic.org

Canadian Pensioners Concerned
829 Naroch Blvd.
Pickering, ON L1W 1T1
local: (905) 839-3857
fax: (905) 839-3857

Canadian Red Cross
170 Metcalfe Street
Ottawa, ON K2P 2P2
local: (613) 740-1900
fax: (613) 740-1911
www.redcross.ca

Congress of Union Retirees
c/o Canadian Labour Congress
2841 Riverside Drive, 4th Floor
Ottawa, ON K1V 8X7
local: (613) 526-7422
fax: (613) 521-3113

Federal Superannuates National Association (FSNA)
1052 St. Laurent Blvd.
Ottawa, ON K1K 3B4
local: (613) 745-2559
fax: (613) 745-5457
www.fsna.com

Fédération de l'âge d'or du Québec (FADOQ)
4545 Pierre-de-Coubertin Ave.
P.O. Box 1000, "M"
Montréal, QC H1V 3R2
local: (514) 252-3017
fax: (514) 252-3154
www.fadoq.ca

Health Canada
Division of Aging and Seniors
A.L. 1908A1
Ottawa, ON K1A 1B4
local: (613) 952-7606
fax: (613) 957-9938
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/

O Canada
For information on all federal government benefit programs:
Communication Canada
Attention: Canada Benefits
Ottawa, ON K1A 0S5
toll-free: 1-800-839-0025
TTY/TDD toll-free: 1-800-465-7735
http://canadabenefits.gc.ca

National Advisory Council on Aging (NACA)
A.L. 1908A1, 8th Floor
Ottawa, ON K1A 1B4
local: (613) 957-1968
fax: (613) 957-1176
www.naca.ca

National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation
P.O. Box 393
Hanley, SK S0G 2E0
local: (306) 544-2737
fax: (306) 544-2757

Ontario March of Dimes
10 Overlea Blvd.
Toronto, ON M4H 1A4
toll-free: 1-800-263-DIME (3463)
local: (416) 425-3463
fax: (416) 425-8832
www.dimes.on.ca

Royal Canadian Legion — Dominion Command
359 Kent Street, 6th Floor
Ottawa, ON K2P 0R7
local: (613) 235-4391
fax: (613) 563-1670
www.legion.ca

Seniors Canada On-line
www.seniors.gc.ca

Universal Design Institute
(formerly Canadian Institute for Barrier-Free Design)
201 Russell Building
Faculty of Architecture
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
local: (204) 474-8588
fax: (204) 474-7532
www.arch.umanitoba.ca/cibfd

Veterans Affairs Canada
Sainte-Anne Hospital
c/o Judi Newnham
305, des Anciens-Combattants Blvd.
Sainte-Anne de Bellevue, QC
H9X 1YP

Veterans Affairs Canada

Veterans Affairs Canada
Internet: www.vac-acc.gc.ca

Atlantic Region
Floor 3, Belmont House,
33 Alderney Drive
Dartmouth, NS B2Y 2N4
toll-free: 1-800-565-1528 (N.S., N.B. & P.E.I)
local: (902) 426-6448
TTY/TDD toll-free: 1-800-757-6308

Quebec Region
4545 Queen Mary Road
Montréal, QC H3W 1W4
toll-free: 1-800-291-0471

Ontario Region
145 Government Road W.
Bag Service 4000
Kirkland Lake, ON P2N 3P4
toll-free: 1-800-387-0930
local: (705) 568-4000

Prairie Region
610-234 Donald Street
P.O. Box 6050
Winnipeg, MB R3C 4G5
toll-free: 1-800-665-8717
local: (204) 983-7040

Pacific Region
900-605 Robson Street
P.O. Box 5600
Vancouver, BC V6B 5G4
toll-free: 1-800-647-1-VAC (822)
local: (604) 666-7942

Appendix 2

Blank forms

Analysis of activities of daily living

Use these forms to analyze your own activities and determine your goals. Feel free to make photocopies as required.

Analysis of activities of daily living

The *Analysis of activities of daily living forms* on the next pages are set up to help you remember all of your activities as you think through what you do **in each room** in your home and outside your home.

On these forms, for every room, list all the daily activities that give you trouble. In addition, list the activities you'd like to do, and the activities you'd like to change or end because you can't perform them now or because they give you too many problems, pain or stress. The process is simple:

- In the first column, be sure to list the things that you do every day, and the things you do less regularly (weekly, monthly, annually). Remember to add any new activities you'd like to do as well.

- The second column asks you whether you have any trouble with these activities. Describe the problem that you're having (e.g. can't tie shoelaces).

- The third column asks you to think about why you're having the problems. Is it a lack of balance? Does it take more strength than you have? Are you stiff, so that you can't reach far enough? Does it tire you out too much? Can you do the activity, but aren't satisfied with the results?

- The next column asks you to decide whether it's important to you to do the activity yourself. This will help you set priorities, both in how you spend your money on assistive devices and how you spend your energy. Rate the activity:

  3 — if it's important to you to do the activity yourself.

  2 — if you're willing to accept help. (If you live with someone else, are you willing to accept help?)

  1 — if you don't care whether you do it yourself, or don't care whether you do it at all. (Are you able to hire someone to do it for you, and is that acceptable to you?)

- Leave the last column until you've completed the whole form. Reviewing all of your problem areas and the reasons for the problems, will help you find some common areas (needs), recognize the activities you consider really important and start you on the process of finding solutions (goals).

Analysis of Activities of Daily Living

Living Room

Activity	Trouble	Why	Importance 1, 2 or 3 *	Possible Solution

***Importance Rating:**

1 = You don't care whether you can do it yourself or at all.
2 = You're willing to accept help.
3 = It's very important for you to do this yourself.

Kitchen
Dining Room

Analysis of Activities of Daily Living

Activity	Trouble	Why	Importance 1, 2 or 3 *	Possible Solution

***Importance Rating:**

1 = You don't care whether you can do it yourself or at all.
2 = You're willing to accept help.
3 = It's very important for you to do this yourself.

Analysis of Activities of Daily Living

Bedroom

Activity	Trouble	Why	Importance 1, 2 or 3 *	Possible Solution

***Importance Rating:**

1 = You don't care whether you can do it yourself or at all.
2 = You're willing to accept help.
3 = It's very important for you to do this yourself.

Analysis of Activities of Daily Living

Bathroom

Activity	Trouble	Why	Importance 1, 2 or 3 *	Possible Solution

***Importance Rating:**

1 = You don't care whether you can do it yourself or at all.
2 = You're willing to accept help.
3 = It's very important for you to do this yourself.

Recreation & Social Areas

Analysis of Activities of Daily Living

Activity	Trouble	Why	Importance 1, 2 or 3 *	Possible Solution

***Importance Rating:**

1 = You don't care whether you can do it yourself or at all.
2 = You're willing to accept help.
3 = It's very important for you to do this yourself.

Analysis of Activities of Daily Living

Outside the Home

Activity	Trouble	Why	Importance 1, 2 or 3 *	Possible Solution

***Importance Rating:**

1 = You don't care whether you can do it yourself or at all.
2 = You're willing to accept help.
3 = It's very important for you to do this yourself.

Analysis of Activities of Daily Living

Activity	Trouble	Why	Importance 1, 2 or 3 *	Possible Solution

***Importance Rating:**

1 = You don't care whether you can do it yourself or at all.
2 = You're willing to accept help.
3 = It's very important for you to do this yourself.

Analysis of Activities of Daily Living

Activity	Trouble	Why	Importance 1, 2 or 3 *	Possible Solution

***Importance Rating:**

1 = You don't care whether you can do it yourself or at all.
2 = You're willing to accept help.
3 = It's very important for you to do this yourself.

Notes

Aknowledgement

The original version of the "Go for it!" guide was supported by the European Commission within the Telematics Applications Programme, Disabled and Elderly Sector. The guide was written by the EUSTAT (Empowering Users Through Assistive Technology) Consortium, composed of: Association nationale pour le logement des personnes handicapées (ANLH), Brussels, Belgium; Groupement pour l'insertion des personnes handicapées physiques (GIHP), Bordeaux, France; Danish Centre for Technical Aids for Rehabilitation and Education (DC), Taastrup, Denmark; Centro Análise é Processamento de Sinais (CAPS), Instituto Superior Tecnico, Lisbon, Portugal; and Centro Studi Prisma (PRIS), Belluno, Italy. This group kindly authorized us to use their materials.

The Canadian adaptation of the guide was produced by the **Health Canada/Veterans Affairs Canada Falls Prevention Initiative** through Health Canada's Division of Aging and Seniors, in cooperation with the Canadian Red Cross, Toronto Region, the Ontario March of Dimes, the Province of Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and Toronto Family Services Association.

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